

Why You Need to be in Santa Barbara Right Now



With temps averaging a beachy-perfect 70 degrees, Santa Barbara's Indian summer is in full-on awesomeness right now. Which means – road trip! Get thee to the palm-tree dotted coastal town ASAP for some serious beach bumming, poolside lazing, water sporting, shopping, eating, and insane vista ogling.

STAY: For a primo locale, the historic Hotel Mar Monte-turned-Hyatt Santa Barbara is the ideal base camp for exploring the American Riviera. Nearing completion of a \$9 million dollar overhaul, this 80-year-old oceanfront landmark sprawls along the main coastal drag of Cabrillo Boulevard. Fusing Spanish Colonial, upscale modern, and beachside cazh, the revamped rooms feature coved ceilings, dark rich woods, and balcony views of the Pacific surf and white sand beaches or Santa Ynez Mountains. You can take a dip in the pool and bubbling hot tub or sunbathe on the comfy chaises beneath the terra cotta umbrellas. The property is family-friendly, which is great if you have wee ones (not-so-great if you're seeking ultra-quiet). Either way, you'll unwind in the laid-back Santa Barbara vibe.

EAT: For the best brunch in town, the luxe [Four Seasons The Biltmore Santa Barbara](#) Sunday buffet is well worth a visit - if you can swallow the pricey tab. In a decidedly romantic garden setting overlooking the sea, you'll feast on an amazing spread including delectable pastries, cheeses, seafood, and an egg-lover-worthy omelet bar.

[Jeannine's Bakery](#) on Upper State Street is a more affordable breakfast option. It dishes up country-style charm with a killer array of freshly baked muffins, scones and to-die-for Banana French Toast. Plus, the sun-drenched courtyard is perfect for people watching.

You'll definitely want to chow at [Hyatt's Bistro Eleven Eleven](#). In stylishly relaxed digs, contemporary California cuisine is served alongside the picturesque East Beach coastline. The service rocks, as does the Sonoma Goat Cheese and Baby Spinach Salad, Organic Prosciutto Wrapped Scallops, and selection of local wines.

Lunch like a local at [La Super-Rica Taqueria](#). This inconspicuous street-corner taco shack

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is a classic Mexican fare fave. Pressed-on-site homemade tortillas are jam-packed with well-seasoned meats, cheeses, guacamole, or your choice combo. Hey, even Julia Child was a fan.

The casual Cajun-inspired eatery, [The Palace Grill](#), is a must when you're in town. Dinner begins with a basket of scrumptious muffins flavored apricot to molasses. And it gets even better from the flavorful Blackened Catfish to the Jambalaya Pasta to the Louisiana Bread Pudding Soufflé (delish!). Expect spontaneous restaurant sing-alongs and libation toasting with the whole staff.

Definitely don't miss the sprawling [Downtown Farmer's Market](#) on Saturdays for the best local produce.

DO: Step into nature with a slew of outdoor water sports: West Beach offers stand-up paddling, jet-skiing, fishing, whale watching, and boat tours through the calm, sparkling waters. [Santa Barbara Adventure Co.](#) leads must-do sea cave kayaking excursions through the wildlife-infused Channel Islands. Or, splash around and chill on the wide sandy beaches.

Get your cultural fix at the [Santa Barbara Museum of Art](#) with the Picasso and Braque exhibit now through January 8th. Then catch the latest flick or local arts performance at the historic Spanish Revival-style [Arlington Theatre](#) (the unique architecture alone—complete with church-like steeple—is worth the visit).

The [Santa Barbara Zoo](#) features super-cool creatures on the impeccably manicured grounds of a former private estate.

SHOP: Palm-tree lined State Street serves up some unique finds amidst the sea of upscale tourist shops and college hotspots. Scout the well-curated selection of locally handcrafted wares at [Plum Goods](#). Snag cute vintage frocks at [Lovebird Boutique](#) and [Jewelry Bar](#).

If you're in the mood to venture beyond, celeb-residing Montecito is chock full of upscale boutiques and beautiful homes. And with the annual grape harvest in full swing, there's no better time to visit Santa Barbara Wine County - sampling local varietals from outposts like [Carr Winery](#), gourmet picnicking, and exploring the lush vineyards.

By [Stephanie Orma](#) on October 11, 2011 10:00 AM

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